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NIGERIA AFTER THE WAR

With the civil war over and secession decisively defeated, the federal military government is now attempting the complex task of rebuilding Nigeria, Africa's most populous country. Winning the war in itself was a considerable achievement for General Gowon's government, but the basic problems that brought about the political upheaval in the first place remain unsolved. The old federal system, which was designed to accommodate the power relationships among the three main tribal groupings, was unable to cope with those problems. The elements now in control believe that this system was actually a major contributor to the political crisis. The new leaders, who are from small tribes, are determined to fashion a new structure that will prevent a return to big-tribe domination. Some steps have already been taken in this direction, but the men in charge are still feeling their way and probably remain unsure about the best way to achieve their objectives. In foreign affairs, the new Nigeria is clearly more nationalistic and assertive than its predecessor, although Gowon's government will probably continue to follow a pragmatic policy with no major departures. At the same time, the Nigerians are likely to remain suspicious of all foreign powers.

THE POSTWAR SITUATION

The federal army has remained in firm control of the former Eastern Region—the original secessionist territory—since the abrupt end of the war some four months ago. No guerrilla warfare has occurred, and the possibility of any developing is remote. Banditry, probably by ex-soldiers, has increased recently in the southwestern part of the Ibo East Central State, but at present it does not seem likely that this will get out of hand. Most of the secessionist soldiers joined groups of refugees or returned to their villages when the war ended, while a large number of officers and noncommissioned officers turned themselves in to be screened for reabsorption into the army.

A large occupation force remains in the former secessionist territory, but these troops have been kept out of the main towns wherever possible. Most routine law-and-order functions are

carried out by the Nigeria Police, which include some reinstated Ibos.

By the time the war ended, the Nigerian Army had grown to some 200,000 men, among them many untrained recruits. Since then, there have been some violent incidents between army troops and civilians and police, mainly in the North. There has been vague talk of the need to demobilize, but the federal leaders are in no hurry to do so, and Nigeria is likely to have a relatively large standing army for some time to come.

The federal military government emerged from the war in a strong political position, with Gowon something of a national hero. At present, Gowon's leadership faces no serious challenge.

Although he has disavowed any personal political ambitions, all indications are that he intends to stick as head of the government until it is

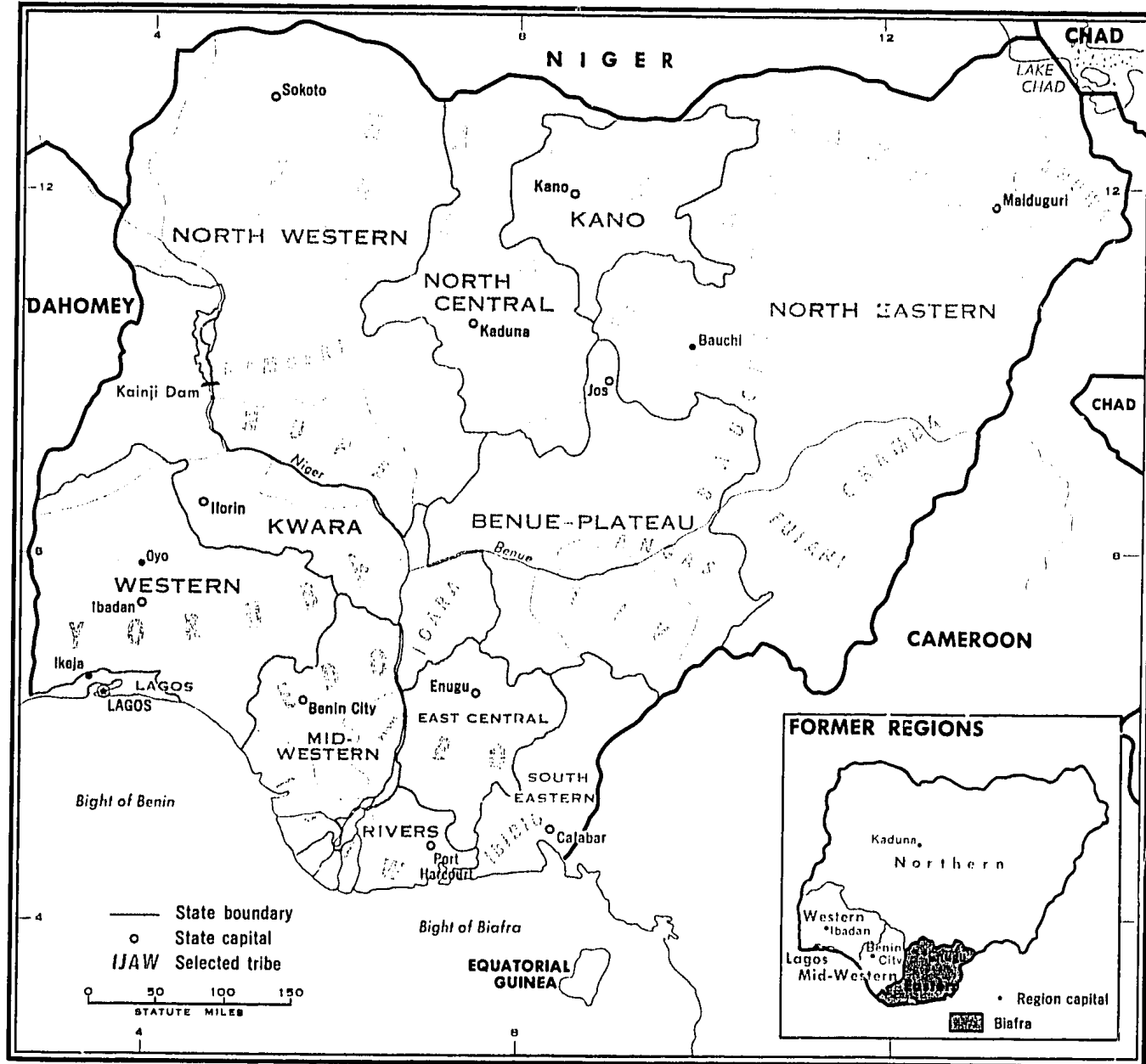
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States and Tribal Groups of Nigeria



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returned to civilian rule—a move unlikely to occur for another two years or more. Gowon recently spoke of several time-consuming procedures, possibly including a census, that would have to precede the return. In early May, the federal government issued a decree formally placing itself above the law and prohibiting judicial review of any of its orders. This move was probably designed to remind the Nigerians of the absolute supremacy of the military government and to end any notion that the old civilian parliament might be revived.

Secessionist leader Ojukwu is in Ivory Coast, where he is seeking to keep an organization together. He has been in contact with the handful of other Biafran leaders abroad, some of whom have ambitious—albeit unrealistic—plans to influence events at home. Ojukwu probably retains support among many Ibo tribesmen in Nigeria, but there is virtually no likelihood that they would answer a call from him to renew the secession attempt. Unless the occupation suddenly takes a turn for the worse, which is unlikely, Ojukwu's political future will remain dim.

RECONCILIATION POLICY

At war's end, Lagos announced a conciliatory policy toward the secessionists, including the absorption of "misguided" army and police officers and the reinstatement of civil servants. Several thousand ex-Biafran policemen have already been reinstated, and some have been reassigned as far away as Lagos. A federal military tribunal has been established to screen army officers, but thus far none is known to have been reabsorbed.

a few officers have been cleared and allowed to return to civilian life. The highest ranking secessionist officer, Colonel Effiong, has been placed under "protective custody."

The reintegration of eastern civil servants has also been proceeding, although at a slow pace. In

mid-May, a federal official announced that slightly over 1,000 had been formally reinstated; over half of these people were posted outside the East Central State, with nearly 200 going to four of the northern states. These represent the first group of easterners to return to the north, where over a million had lived before the war.

One federal program that has done much to convince the Ibos that Lagos was serious about reconciliation has been the food relief effort. The actual food situation in the three eastern states has never been accurately determined, but the Nigerian Red Cross (NRC) has been providing at least some food to 2-3 million people since shortly after the end of the war. The massive program was reduced this month, and the NRC's role may possibly end after June, at which time the remaining problem of food relief would be turned over to the state. State administrations are not as well organized as the NRC, and there will probably be an increase in malnutrition if the NRC is phased out. Whether the NRC will continue after 30 June has not yet been finally decided.

Although the East Central State has an Ibo civilian administrator, he was appointed by Gowon during the war and is probably regarded as a quisling by most Ibos. Moreover, many of the present local officials were either recruited during the war or were simply the first people to meet the advancing federal troops. Thus far, the Ibo tribesmen have been preoccupied with making the best of a difficult economic situation, and little dissatisfaction over the state administration is evident. At some point, however, Gowon may well see the political need to appoint officials more acceptable to the Ibo masses; such officials would have to include some who supported secession.

There are sizable elements within the government that oppose Gowon's conciliatory policy

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and believe the Ibos should be punished. In addition, the non-Ibo tribesmen now in control in Rivers and South Eastern states, as well as many northern tribesmen, are convinced that too much is being done for the former enemy. These elements seem to have persuaded Gowon of the need for a cautious approach to the reintegration of the Ibos, but it is unlikely that he would adopt a really vindictive policy.

THE ECONOMIC PICTURE

Apart from a troublesome price inflation and a somewhat precarious foreign exchange situation, Nigeria has emerged from the war in generally good economic condition. The federal government did not incur any external war debts, and what problems exist certainly seem manageable. On the plus side is the rise in oil production, which last April reached one million barrels per day, nearly double the prewar high. The rapid development of manufacturing industries outside the old Eastern Region is also promising.

In contrast with the rest of the federation, the three eastern states were economically prostrate at the end of the war. Production facilities were extensively damaged, many bridges were destroyed, and the electric power system required major repairs. A serious, immediate problem exists over the shortage of federal currency in the East Central State. The government has collected what it could of the now-illegal Biafran money, but it has not yet decided whether to effect an exchange with Nigerian currency. A considerable amount of federal money has been filtering into the East Central State as a result of spending by Nigerian Army troops, by relief officials, and by traders from other parts of the country.

Another major economic problem is caused by the fact that most of the Ibo tribesmen are crowded into the East Central State, which even

before the war could not support them all. Some have returned to Lagos, Mid-Western, and Western states, and a small number have gone back to the north. Ibos are clearly unwelcome, however, in Rivers and South Eastern states, which are controlled by vehemently anti-Ibo tribes. This situation will slow the recovery of places such as Port Harcourt, which had been a predominantly Ibo city before the war. Thus far, failure to tackle the problem of what to do with the ambitious and generally well-educated Ibos has not caused widespread discontent among them, but their continuing restriction remains an element of potential instability.

GOWON AND HIS CONSTITUENCY

Federal leaders are aware of the economic and political problems of the three eastern states, but they view reconstruction in terms of the whole federation. Gowon and his closest associates are trying to use this period to reshape Nigeria's economic and political institutions to accommodate the profound transformation of power relationships that occurred as a result of Gowon's taking over the leadership in August 1966.

Nigeria had become independent six years earlier under a system designed to reflect the predominance of the country's three main tribal groupings—the Muslim Hausa-Fulanis of the north, the Yorubas of the west, and the Ibos of the east. At the same time, there were sizable numbers of minority tribesmen throughout the federation, particularly in the north and the east. In January 1966, the thoroughly corrupt civilian regime through which the big-tribe system functioned was destroyed in a coup d'etat by young, southern officers. Six months later, the succeeding Ibo-dominated military government was itself overthrown by northern army elements who turned to Gowon, the ranking northern officer,

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Major General Yakubu Gowon
Head of Federal Military Government

for leadership. Gowon was not from the Northern Region's traditionally dominant Hausa-Fulani group but rather was a minority tribesman and a Christian.

In May 1967, Gowon decreed the breakup of the four administrative regions of the federation into 12 states, a move clearly designed to dilute the power of the large tribes. This action, aimed particularly at freeing minority areas of the old Eastern Region from domination by the Ibos, triggered the declaration of secession toward which Ojukwu, who never recognized Gowon's leadership, had long been moving. Thus, to Gowon and his constituency, the federal victory in the war represents the completion of an internal revolution.

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There is, of course, opposition to the minority tribesmen's objectives. The first generation of Nigerian politicians, whose careers were made in big-tribe politics, are by no means resigned to a secondary role. At this point, however, there is little they can do to change things. The most

In northern Nigeria, a number of old-line Hausa-Fulani politicians have been holding meetings with some of their counterparts from local minority tribes to plan political strategy. This grouping now seems mainly to be trying to block Awolowo's accession to power. It does include some rich and powerful politicians, however, who are anticipating a return to civilian rule. The new state structure has also provoked opposition among traditional local leaders, particularly in the far north, who had considerable power under the old system.

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THE 12-STATE STRUCTURE

Area	Area Sq. Miles	*Population Millions	Major Ethnic Groups	Comment
Kano	16,630	6.0	Hausa-Fulanis	Strong historical basis for unity; state boundaries approximate 19th century emirate of Kano; exceptional ethnic homogeneity.
North Western	65,143	6.0	Hausa-Fulani, Nupe	State capital of Sokoto traditionally was focus of religious and political allegiance of Muslim Hausa-Fulanis; Hausa-Fulani predominance in state administration resented by Nupe and other small tribes in south.
North Central	27,108	4.0	Hausa-Fulanis	Hausa-Fulani control of state administration opposed by non-Muslim tribes in south.
North Eastern	105,025	8.0	Kanuri, Hausa-Fulani	Kanuris, although Muslim, were never conquered by Hausa-Fulanis; small tribes make up approximately 50 percent of state population; this state may be split into two.
Benue-Plateau	39,204	4.0	Tiv, Idoma	Tiv and Idoma, although traditional rivals, both fear Hausa-Fulani domination.
Kwara	28,672	2.5	Yoruba, Igala, Igbira, Nupe	Yorubas predominate, but there are many ethnic groups and many resultant problems; minimal historical basis for political cohesion.
Western	29,100	9.5	Yoruba	As homogeneous as Kano state, but Yoruba tribe itself is factionalized.
Lagos	1,381	1.5	Yoruba	Coastal Yorubas and non-Yorubas share a high degree of cultural Westernization.
Mid-Western	14,922	2.5	Edo, Ibo, Urhobo, Ijaw	Edo tribesmen who now control state administration once made up famous Kingdom of Benin.
East Central	11,327	7.5	Ibo	Solid Iboland; this mainly rural area became the stronghold of Biafran resistance during the war.
Rivers	6,985	1.5	Ijaw	Ijaws, who are strongly anti-Ibo, control state administration; Ijaw predominance resented by smaller tribes.
South Eastern	11,175	3.5	Efik, Ibibio	Efik, who live near Calabar, assimilated Western culture more rapidly than Ibibio; northern sector inhabited by several small, isolated tribes.
Total	356,669	56.5		

**Based on 1963 census, the results of which were inflated for political reasons. Although only very rough estimates, these figures do give some idea of the relative population of the states.*

As far as Gowon and his constituency are concerned, however, the only question is whether more states should be created and, if so, how many. There is a good chance that the Western State, the homeland of the Yorubas and the power base of Chief Awolowo, will be broken up into two or perhaps three states. One faction of the Yoruba tribe wants this, but Chief Awolowo opposes it. Gowon does not like or trust Awolowo, however, and he will probably break up the Western State if only to undermine Awolowo. It is also possible that the North Eastern State and

perhaps some others will be split. The question of forming new states could, of course, be passed on to an eventual civilian government, but Gowon and his colleagues certainly realize that it could most easily be handled by decree; there are no signs that such a decree will be forthcoming in the immediate future, however.

Another thorny problem Gowon may want to settle by decree is that of a permanent formula for the distribution of federal revenue. Last March, the government implemented a revenue

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distribution scheme that moved toward a more equitable distribution of funds to all parts of the federation in place of the old system favoring the rich areas. There is a considerable disparity in resources among the 12 states, and it seems likely that Gowon will eventually ensure a revenue distribution system protecting the poorer states.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The government seems inclined to continue the basically pragmatic foreign policy adopted during the war. Federal leaders have not forgotten that they paid in full for all the military weapons they acquired from the Soviet Union. Since the war, Lagos has canceled orders from the USSR, and the military leaders have never been enthusiastic about expanding ties with the Communists. Nevertheless, the fact that some civilian elements want closer relations with the Soviets, and that even the military see the need for a friendlier attitude toward Moscow, could result in closer economic and cultural ties. Indeed, in late 1968, a general economic agreement was signed with the USSR setting the stage for future Soviet-aided projects. The Soviet Union has sent some technicians and geological experts to Nigeria but has not yet undertaken any economic aid projects.

The Nigerian Government remains favorably disposed toward the UK, but is suspicious of the US, which is generally believed to have given moral—if not material—support to the secessionists. Gowon wants correct diplomatic relations with the US, however, and will probably continue to work to convince his colleagues that this is a wise course to follow.

Nigeria has shown some signs of adopting a more activist policy in Africa. Although the present government is unlikely to undertake any dramatic initiatives, Lagos could well step up its

propaganda and material support for black nationalist movements in southern Africa. Such support would fit well with the idea that Nigeria's military suppression of a foreign-backed attempt to divide Africa's largest country redounded to the advantage of the "Black Man," a recurrent theme in recent propaganda out of Lagos.

OUTLOOK

The Nigerians emerged from the war with a much-increased consciousness of national unity, and there is no reason to believe that this attitude will soon disappear. It is by no means certain, however, that the Gowon regime can make permanent structural changes in the federation to reflect the new-found power of the small tribes. The minority elements now in control of the army seem firmly entrenched there. They appear to know what it is they want but are not quite sure of how to go about it. At present, they are working toward a political system that would include a strong central government and at least the present 12 states. Power at the center would be designed mainly to protect the minority tribes from domination by the large tribes, but federal leaders will have to withstand pressures for the creation of more and more states to accommodate Nigeria's many small tribes.

The achievement of political stability in Nigeria is no easy task. All the forces contributing to instability—tribalism, regionalism, a plethora of scheming politicians, and endemic financial corruption—remain. Any future civilian government will have to deal with them, as well as with the Ibo problem, which admits of no easy solution. Although many difficulties remain, Gowon and his constituency seem determined to develop a workable political entity. Given a reasonable amount of luck, they just might be able to pull it off.

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